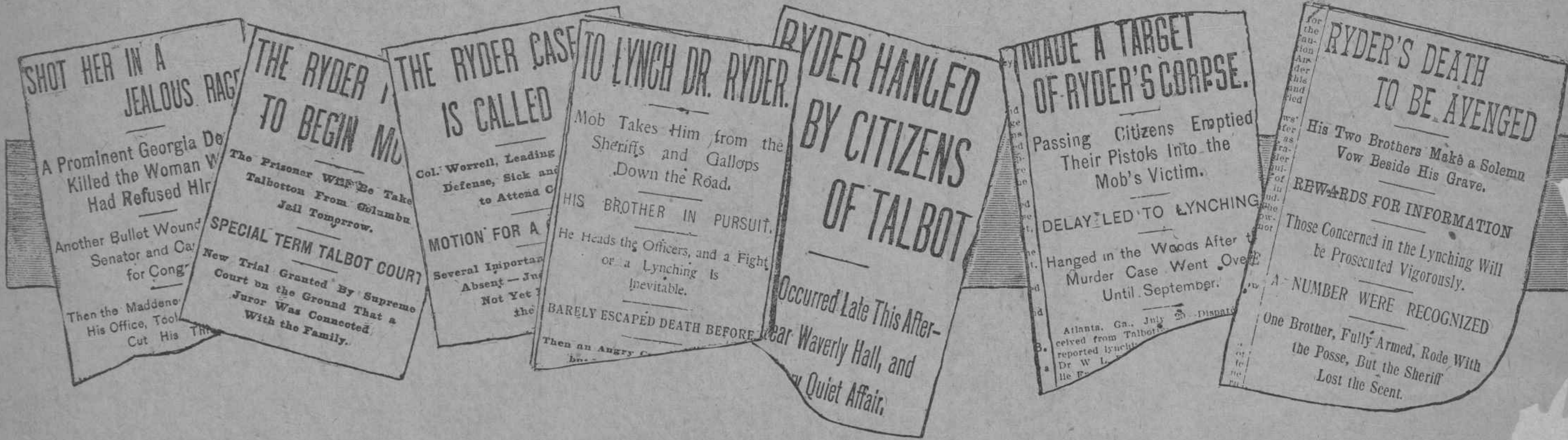


LOVE THAT ENDED IN A LYNCHING.



THE STORY OF THE TRAGEDY AS TOLD BY THE NEWSPAPERS.

COURTSHIP.

THIS tragic tale does not belong to today. It is of that dead and gone Dixie before the war, when great families nurtured great passions and strong men met in deadly hatred and bloody deed. It is not a lynching story of the kind which obtains down South when the Summer madness has its sway. It is the tale of a gentleman fallen mad because of love, the kind of gentleman which is raised in that clime, who carried a Southern love passion in his heart till it took possession of him, dominated him, drove him to desperation and sent him to kill his love as one might kill a dog.

It is the story of Dr. W. L. Ryder, the Georgia dentist, who, eighteen months ago, murdered his sweetheart, Miss Sallie Emma Owen, and five days ago was lynched by an avenging mob.

Sallie Emma Owen was a beautiful woman, out of good blood. The Owens have been prominent in their county for fifty years. She was a graduate of Wesleyan Female College, and brilliant in attainment. She had a sister, Lizzie May Owen, almost as beautiful as she, and quite as brilliant intellectually. They were Talbot County belles.

They and the Ryders were related. The Ryders were also an old family, and the Ryder boys are among the best people in the county. The two families had lived half a century in the same neighborhood and had intermarried. Doctor Ryder fell in love with Miss Sallie Emma Owen, when she returned from school a budding woman. Because of that long-time family friendship Miss Owen respected him, and perhaps encouraged him. He was doing well in his profession. The two families looked with favor upon the prospective match. The two were in the habit of attending Talbot County functions together, and the neighborhood got to think of Miss Owen as the prospective wife of Dr. Ryder.

Dr. Ryder and his supposed fiancée were a most distinguished-looking couple. The families of both were more than pleased with the prospects of a union.

JEALOUSY.

Then Hon. A. P. Persons, a lawyer and State Senator, himself well bred and of good prospects, began to see Miss Owen. From the first she showed him a marked preference. Talbot is an old-fashioned Georgia county, with old-fashioned ideas about things. Miss Owen was even censured for permitting Persons's attentions, but permit them she did.

But Ryder never gave up. He loved her as few men love, and he was determined that she should be his, without rival. Both he and Persons continued their attentions. The affair became one of the things talked about in that primitive community. Ryders showed signs of violent jealousy at times, but never made an open threat. Persons did the same thing. The McCoy family were friends and connected by marriage with both the Owens and the Ryders. The young people were accustomed to entertainment at the home of the McCoy.

They made up barbeque parties, and Persons and Ryder attentively rode to the country dances in the same vehicle. Each knew what the other thought; each was wary, as became him under the circumstances. Each man went armed and each was ready at any time the showdown came to make good his end of the argument. Those things occur in Georgia and vicinity. The two men sometimes meet in anger, and for the love of a woman one or both dies. That is the chivalry still left in the land.

Ryder was of a nervous temperament, and he perhaps loved Miss Owen in a more unreasoning way than did his popular rival. Persons was politically ambitious. The Ryders were prominent enough to keep him from going to Congress. That was the only sign the Ryders gave. Miss Owen and the Owen family knew that, but it did not bring a split in the relationship of the two families. Persons said nothing and went on with his ambitious political and his attentions social. Miss Owen continued to see him. She continued to see Dr. Ryder.

MURDER.

On a dreamy Sunday evening in April a year ago, Dr. Ryder called at the Owens home. When he stepped into the broad southern hallway of the McCoy house he saw Persons and Miss Sallie Emma Owen standing in the parlor. He said not a word to them, but excused himself and went hurriedly out of the house and down the little street.

After his departure from the house, Persons and Miss Owen had sat down and re-

"THE LAW'S DELAY."

The murder of Miss Sallie Emma Owen occurred on the 5th of April, 1896. An indictment was duly found and an early trial was arranged. In jail the Doctor showed signs of nervous insanity. The lawyers for the defence determined that insanity should be their plea. The evidence of the murder was too strong to permit of any defence in that direction. On the fourth Monday in May following the crime, Ryder was arraigned in Special Sessions and the

MADNESS.

There were women in the court room, too. Over there at one side were an aged widow, a daughter, a son and a grandson. They were the Ryders. They smiled at the prisoner and he smiled back. Across yonder on the other side were another aged woman and a daughter. They were Mrs. Owens and Miss Lizzie May Owens. They drooped their heads in sorrow, and the prisoner drooped his in shame and remorse.

LYNCHING.

That evening six deputy sheriffs started with Ryder for Columbus jail. On the way a body of mounted men seized the prisoner, who was in a wagon. The Sheriff heard rumors of a lynching and summoned a posse. Ryder's brother was with that body. The parties met, but the prisoner, gauged in the bottom of a wagon, was not seen.

That meeting in the road where neither spoke and one could not know because of the darkness, was the most dramatic thing in this blood story. From that moment Ryder began to fight. He struggled with his captors; he screamed; he tore. At one time he was out of the wagon and under the feet of the horses. Anything for time. Time was everything to him. He knew another Ryder was trying to save him and he knew how hard that other Ryder would try.

The Sheriff and his posse with the brother in the lead reached Waverly Hall. Then they knew where lay a mistake, fatal without hope. The mob went on with the other Ryder. They crossed the line into Talbot County and stopped under a post oak tree, the favorite swing for mobs. Ryder fought and fought hard. He knew the brother would come back and try, no matter the odds. He fought, but to no purpose. A common cotton rope went round his neck. He was dragged under the limb and strong hands drew his feet clear of the ground. Then they tied the other end of the rope round the body of the tree and waited.

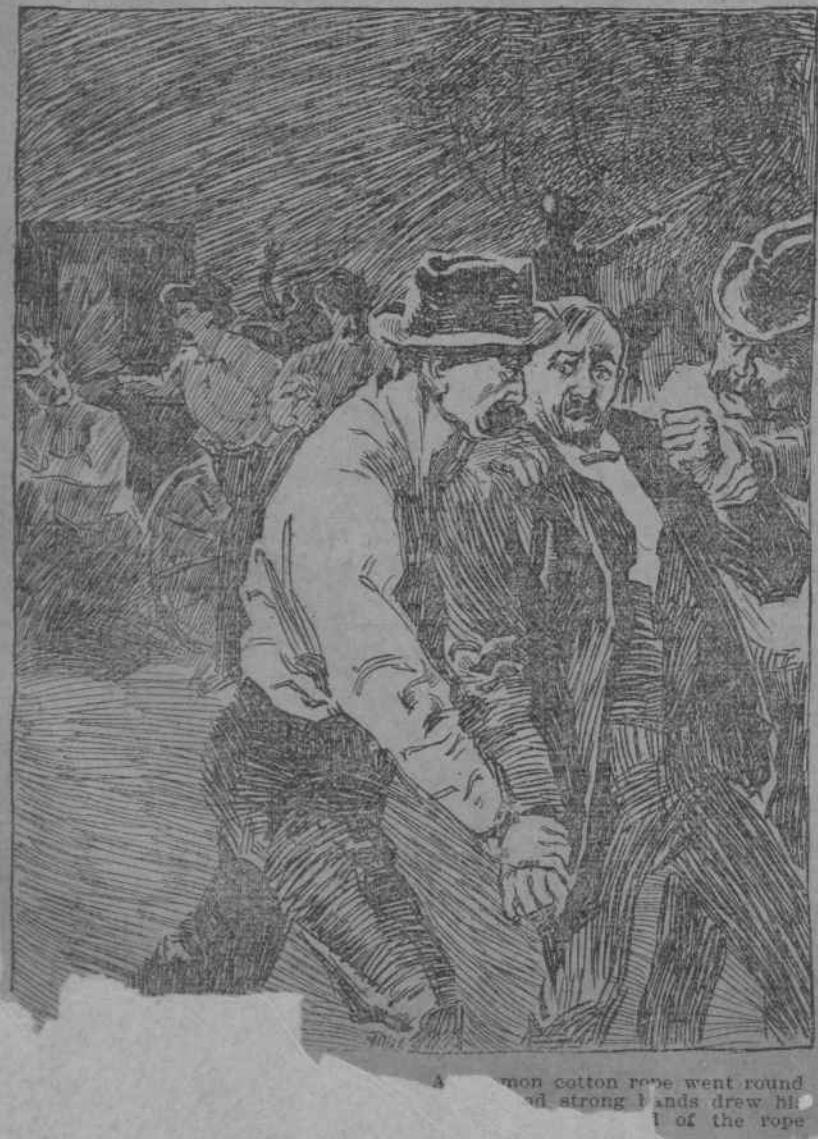
There was a swinging of a shadowy body under the tree, some gasps, and then stillness. The nervous fingers which had slid between the triggers of a shotgun were clutched in the agony of a horrible death. The mob, the men who had stood outside the rail, the men who had been as quiet about Talbotton, dispersed, slipped away into the oblivion of the night and tied their horses at last in their own barns. Vengeance was done. The posse found the swaying body late in the night. There will be no case at the September term.

VENGEANCE.

Men in the field not forget years old. The death of Dr. Ryder, which may cost the man who rescues him, is another brother. All are brave. Charles may be Two days in swinging at the dark. Ryder was interred private burying grounds within a few years old. Many gathered to witness the interment. The yellow mound had been built up the still thing down there. Charles I the other brother and the nephew at out of the dark-robed crowd. Across grave the three joined hands in a clasp.

Then they uttered an oath, of revenge into an avenging triumph. This death of a Ryder of the Owens are no men worthy of their steel, will not war with women. But Charles Ryder recognized some of them at midnight dash down the darkness road. It is upon them that revenge will be visited. It is to search them out, identify thoroughly, and then—Georgians do not say what.

But there is a custom in Georgia. It provides that a man may shoot an enemy on sight, with the knowledge that the courts will take into consideration the cause for the shooting. When gentlemen of good family and on has been lynched, that is great, the mob may never feel the law for their deed of vengeance. It is implicable hatred upon their is the hatred of the Ryders, a not sleep. It may strike in the night. At home the women of two tried will weep.



Dr. W. L. Ryder and Sallie Emma Owen, the Sweetheart He Murdered.

From photographs.

sumed the conversation interrupted by the arrival of the rival suitor. It was a peaceful Southern night, quite bright from a new moon, and still as Southern nights are. The man and the woman he loved were alone. The front door stood hospitably open. Ryder had the entire always. Miss Owens sat nearest the parlor door and in full view of the front door with her side face to the entrance. Persons sat beyond her, but also in sight of the door.

Suddenly a shadowy form darkened the portal and crouched there, and then a flash of fire leaped out of the semi-darkness and Miss Owens, with a groan, dropped her head upon her bosom and sank softly to the floor. Persons sprang up and there was another flash through the smoke of the first. A buckshot tore its way through Persons's cheek and a dozen more ploughed into the window sill behind him.

The impact dropped him to the floor, but he was up again in a flash and bending over the prostrate body of the woman he loved. She was dead, and a great wound in the side of her face showed how life had flown.

The two gunshots were heard all over the village. A few moments after Ryder rushed into his office. A young man in the hall of the building saw him take a drink from a vial and then he went tumbling down the stairs and into the street. He was hurrying along the way. Ryder brushed past them, went across town, times almost on a run, and disappeared at the house.

trial began. All the facts of the murder as given here were produced in court. The best legal talent in Georgia was employed. The fight was long and bitter. Ryder's attorneys, themselves friends of both families, labored unceasingly. Ryder sat through it all nervously and evidently afraid of the consequences. He feared a verdict of guilty at the hands of the jury, and should they fail to agree, a verdict of death at the hands of those stern-faced men who lined themselves up in the little courtroom and waited.

Ryder was convicted. It was murder in the first degree and the penalty, the rope. But the lawyers—they were not done. They went to work on a new tack. They discovered that one of the jurors in the case was a distant relative of the Owens family. That small thing was sufficient for the filing of voluminous papers, and in the end the Court granted a new trial. Ryder was happier. By the time the new trial came off public opinion might have changed; the crime would be old; and there was a chance. He played insane in the Columbus jail, where he had been taken for safe keeping. He was weak, but probably from the long, nervous strain. He lay in jail all through last Summer and well to this.

Waiting of a new trial and the necessary expenses took much time. It is the 19th of this month that he was out of the Columbus jail, and his accusers were waiting for the crime, be-

The same brilliant array of legal talent was present. Colonel Carey Thornton, one of Georgia's best lawyers, made a motion for a continuance. The crowd leaned and listened and made no murmur, that crowd outside the rails, friends all of the girl dead more than a year. One of the counsel was ill; a little delay would not hurt; might it not be had? The Judge listened and protested, but the attorneys argued while the prisoner trembled. The argument was good, as law arguments go, and the Judge yielded. He consented to a postponement of the case until the regular term of the court in September. Lawyers sometimes err in their own behalf.

That crowd outside the rail made no comment. They silently left the court room. Mrs. Ryder, the mother, Miss Ryder, the sister, Professor Ryder, the brother, and young Ryder, the nephew, took their way out of the gloom of the place. At the door they brushed against the Owens family. The Owens drew back. The Ryders saw not their old intimates, there was no word or motion to say that either of the old Southern families had known each other. There was the impassable bar of blood between them, and Georgians do not ever cross that bar.

The silent crowd who had stood undemonstrative outside the rail saw that and muttered—the first sign they had given. Then they were silent. The Ryders went one way home; the Owens took another.

It was very still in the night. A crowd of people went down the street and night

